

# THE VISTA CONNECTION

November, 2011



We at Bay Area Community Resources enjoy working with a dynamic group of volunteers. This team of VISTAs has come from as far as New York to serve with us. Their diverse backgrounds and experiences create an excellent group. We look forward to sharing the impact they make on the Bay Area with you as they serve with us.

*"The heart of a volunteer is not measured in size, but by the depths of the commitment to make a difference"*

*-DeAnn Hollis*

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## Why VISTA?

There are tons of volunteer opportunities out there in the wide world, so why choose to be a VISTA?

AmeriCorps VISTA is a program designed specifically to fight poverty. The volunteers commit to a year of service at a non-profit organization, working to fight illiteracy,

improve health services, strengthen community groups, and much more.

By serving through VISTA, people build skills, knowledge, and networks that will help them transition into a professional career in the non-profit or private sector.

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## Project Spotlight

VISTA Jessie Backer is currently working on 2011 holiday donation drive with her organization, Larkin Street Youth Services. The drive, which lasts until December 16th, is an annual event that aims to collect donated items to provide gifts for more than 450 youth staying in the organization's emergency shelters, transitional housing, or accessing the drop-in centers.

Backer will assist the initiative by managing all the in-kind donations sent to Larkin Street Youth Services by the community during the holidays. "It doesn't take much to truly brighten the holiday season for a homeless youth," she says, "we want to make it so that everyone can find their own way to contribute

something meaningful."

Larkin Street Youth Services is asking for items that range from clothing to gift cards. Of course, monetary donations are always welcome as well.

To see the complete 2011 Holiday Wish list, go to [www.larkinstreetyouth.org](http://www.larkinstreetyouth.org) or email Backer at [jbacker@larkinstreetyouth.org](mailto:jbacker@larkinstreetyouth.org). Larkin Street Youth Services provides homeless, runaway, and at-risk kids between the ages of 12 and 24 with the help they need to rebuild their lives. Their service continuum is comprehensive; it is designed to meet the myriad and evolving needs of kids without a safe place to call home.

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## Vista Leader

My name is Carly Schumacher, and I am so excited to be part of the BACR team!

After college, I decided to join AmeriCorps. I knew that I wanted to volunteer, and "give back to the community," but I had no idea how much of an impact VISTA would have on my personal life. I served in Atlanta, GA, a city very different from where I grew up in suburban Massachusetts, with a non-profit called Operation REACH, Inc. The organization, based in New Orleans, wanted to branch out into Atlanta. My first day of service comprised of signing the lease on our new, empty office. I remember looking at my Volunteer Assignment Description, and thinking, "There is no way we can get

all of this done!"

By the end of my VISTA year of service, I, along with my team of VISTAs, had started two of ORI's programs, and organized a summer program that reached over 150 youths, thanks to the Learn & Serve grant. At the end of my service, I was able to see a very tangible impact of the work I had accomplished.

When I'm not fighting poverty, I enjoy camping, hiking, and exploring the natural beauty of California. I hope to travel to Yosemite soon!

As a VISTA Leader, I hope to make each VISTA's experience one to remember. I look forward to seeing the impact our team will make on the Bay Area community.



*Carly Schumacher has recently started her service as a VISTA Leader for BACR. She looks forward to contributing to the Bay Area community.*

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## Looking Back on a Year of Service

“Looking back at my VISTA year, I feel pride. When I started at the San Leandro Education Foundation (SLED), they had a few passionate volunteers and little infrastructure. Now, SLED has turned into a fast growing organization with dozens of volunteers and sustainable practices. As their only full-time ‘staff’ I worked on every facet of the non-profit, not only helping build their capacity, but also building my own. A few of my highlights include writing and receiving my first grants, training teachers on DonorsChoose.org, and creating materials that SLED will continue to use for years to come. My year was hard work, but incredibly rewarding as I was honored to serve and benefit the school system that I grew up in. I will miss working with all the inspirational SLED Board members who have given me an abundance of support throughout my entire VISTA experience.” *Tessa Atkinson-Adams*

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“For the past 11 months I’ve been working at the Glide Foundation as the Development Coordinator. This has included everything from writing grants, to organizing the fundraising database and lending a hand at a few odd jobs – like stuffing 500 goody boxes at the annual fundraising event. My experience as a VISTA at the Glide Foundation has been one of constant change. It seems like each day I am faced with a new opportunity or challenge, which has allowed me to grow both professionally and personally. Many of the organizations that VISTA work for are like Glide; trying to accomplish seemingly unfeasible tasks such as eradicating poverty, marginalization and discrimination. I’ve learned that in order to have a fighting chance at making a difference in any one of these areas you have to rely on the support of those around you. My VISTA experience and the dedicated people I’ve had the opportunity to work with this year have encouraged me to continue pursuing a life committed to social justice. Although my plan is to continue my career through direct service, the skills that I have learned as a VISTA--such as the nuances of non-profit management and fundraising--have provided me a comprehensive view of what it takes to keep an institution afloat and have better prepared me to succeed in the future.”  
*Katie Perdue*

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## What we do for the Community

*Our Vista team works throughout the Bay Area to Fight Poverty. Here's some of what they do.*

Katie Perdue has spent the year volunteering for Glide Memorial, and created an annual budget for FYCC's Literacy Initiative.



Morgan Mentz is working on a Volunteer Coordinator Manual for East Bay After School Collaborative



Tessa Atkinson-Adams Serves with San Leandro Education Foundation and has raised \$27,000 in grants she wrote throughout her service.



Mara recruits volunteers for Experience Corps. She is also redesigning the handbook for the organization's volunteers.



Jessie Backer is working on streamlining the volunteering outreach process for Larkin Street Youth Services.



Leah Woodcock is working with Experience Corps to create a library where volunteers can access trainings, resources, and mini-lessons.



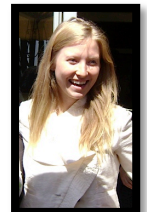
Sara Haile serves as an academic coordinator for DROC, has found permanent meeting space at Gomper High School.



Brandi Ly worked with her organization, OASES, to run a fundraising campaign through Groupon to provide literacy kits for students.



Pia Faxon is responsible for establishing the Bay Area's Strive Young Professional Board. She serves for Strive For College soon.



Meg Duff is the Development and Operations Assistant for SEE College Prep. She has developed a strategy to track grant deadlines.



Emily Allan has been organizing meetings, creating newsletters, and strengthening partnerships for Urban Strategies.



MaryEllen O'Brien serves with Experience Corps in the Oakland area. She builds relations with the local schools to increase the effectiveness of volunteers.

